

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A device for harvesting a segment of tissue from a tissue mass comprising:
 - a. a first elongate housing portion having proximal and distal ends;
 - b. a second elongate housing portion having proximal and distal ends, said second panel member being rigidly affixed to said first elongate housing portion such that said housing portions extend in generally parallel relation to one another and a recess is formed intermediate said first and second panel members; and
 - c. a cutting element formed upon said distal ends of said first and second panel members, said cutting element being operative to form a sliced segment of tissue when advanced through said tissue mass, said sliced segment of tissue being retained within said recess formed intermediate said first and second panel portions.
2. The device of Claim 1 wherein said cutting element is defined by a first blade portion formed upon the distal-most end of said first panel member and a second blade portion formed upon the distal-most end of said second panel member, said first and second cutting edges being cooperatively operative to form a sliced segment of tissue having a fixed thickness.
3. The device of Claim 1 wherein said first and second housing portions are formed to have a generally rectangular shape.
4. The device of Claim 2 wherein said device further comprises a channel member disposed between said first and second cutting edges, said channel defining a pathway through which said sliced segment of tissue extends proximally within said recess formed intermediate said first and second housing portions.
5. The device of Claim 1 wherein said cutting element further has an articulating cutting member operative to slice across and separate a segment of tissue sliced from said tissue mass.
6. A method for harvesting tissue from a patient comprising the steps:
 - a. providing a device for harvesting tissue from an individual, said device comprising:
 - (i) a first elongate housing portion having proximal and distal ends;

(ii) a second elongate housing portion having proximal and distal ends, said second panel member being rigidly affixed to said first elongate housing portion such that said housing portions extend in generally parallel relation to one another and a recess is formed intermediate said first and second panel members; and

(iii) a cutting element formed upon said distal ends of said first and second panel members, said cutting element being operative to form a sliced segment of tissue when advanced through said tissue mass, said sliced segment of tissue being retained within said recess formed intermediate said first and second panel portions;

b. forming an incision upon said individual from which said tissue is to be harvested, said incision being operative to receive said cutting apparatus of said device provided in step (a) when said cutting apparatus is introduced therewithin;

c. advancing said cutting element of said device provided in step (a) within said incision formed in step (b) and advancing said device provided in step (a) through said incision such that said cutting element operatively slices a segment of tissue from a tissue mass surrounding said incision such that said sliced segment of tissue is retained within said recess defined between said first and second housing portions;

d. severing said tissue segment sliced from said tissue mass formed in step (c); and

e. retrieving said segment of tissue separated from said tissue mass in step (d).

7. The method of Claim 6 further comprising the step;

a. tying at least one suture to said segment of tissue harvested in step (e).

8. The method of Claim 6 wherein in step (d), said tissue sliced from said tissue mass is separated from said tissue mass by severing said sliced tissue with said cutting element of said device.

9. The method of Claim 8 wherein said cutting element comprises a first blade portion formed upon the distal-most end of said upper housing portion and a second blade member formed upon the distal-most end of said second housing portion, said first and second blade portions cooperatively defining said cutting element.

10. The method of Claim 6 wherein said cutting element comprises an articulating blade member operative to sever said sliced segment of tissue cut by said cutting element and retained within said recess formed between said first and second housing portions.

11. The device of Claim 1 wherein said cutting element is defined by a single blade formed upon a respective one of said first and second panel members.

12. The method of Claim 8 wherein said cutting element comprises a single blade formed upon a respective one of said first and second panel members.